

Subsequent books, beginning with "In the Mecca" (1968), reflected a change in tone, a more overtly political stance that was often aimed at black readers in particular. For some critics, the change was reason to ignore Brooks's output; for aspiring black writers of subsequent generations, the shift showed us that it was possible to adapt to changing times without distorting one's own voice. At its best, Brooks's work is focused and fiery regardless of form, indisputably Brooksian in its well-tempered elegance. To borrow critic Joanne V. Gabbin's phrase, Brooks's work "implies a literature that is both rageful and resolute in its beauty."

Gabbin convened a conference at James Madison University in 1994. She conceived the conference, titled "Furious Flower" (from a Brooks poem, "Second Sermon on the Warpland"), as a tribute to Brooks. Poets, critics and poetry lovers from around the world gathered at JMU that September; it was the last time I saw Brooks in person.

There, as the reigning eminence of African American poetry, Brooks received numerous accolades and testimonies to her talent and generosity. Two generations of black poets had come to age since Brooks's own emergence, and she'd played a hand in mentoring many of them. (Although she was then 77, Brooks still had mentoring left to do. In 1996 she would establish the Henry Blakely Poetry Prize in memory of her late husband. The \$2,000 award went to a young poet of Brooks's choosing.)

Grateful to be on hand and once again basking in the glow of genius, I felt proud to be among those who had firsthand familiarity with Brooks's goodness. Our wine-and-brie encounter had not been our last.

In 1993, I'd had another opportunity to benefit from her kindness. While editing a literary magazine I'd co-founded, I wrote to Brooks and asked her to contribute to a section honoring poet Audre Lorde, who had died in 1992. As she had done nearly a decade before, Brooks responded quickly. In the brief, eloquent tribute she submitted, she insisted that the essence of Lorde would never be lost as long as we had her words. I don't think she'd mind my applying those sentiments to her legacy as well. We have not lost the essence of Gwendolyn Brooks. The best of her endures.

TRIBUTE TO AMBASSADOR DENNIS B. ROSS—SPECIAL MIDDLE EAST COORDINATOR

HON. TOM LANTOS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, December 11, 2000

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I invite my colleagues in the Congress to join me in paying tribute to Ambassador Dennis B. Ross, who has served both Democratic and Republican Presidents and Secretaries of State as the Special Middle East Coordinator at the Department of State. Over the past decade, Dennis has done more than anyone else in the effort to bring peace and stability to that troubled region of the world.

A short while ago, Dennis made public his intention to work through the end of this current Administration, but he also made clear that he does not intend to work in the next administration. The reasons for his departure are quite understandable—he wants to spend

more time with his wife and three children. Considering the time that he has devoted to shuttling between the United States and the Middle East—many times at very short notice and under extremely difficult circumstances—he deserves the opportunity for more time with his family.

Dennis Ross will be sorely missed as we seek to bring an end to the violence, hostility and instability that have plagued the Middle East for so long. He has played a critical role in dealing with that troubled part of the world for over the past decade. He knows all of the key players, he has worked with them, he understands their political constraints, and he has an intimate grasp of their ideological points of view.

A native of California, Dennis Ross did undergraduate and graduate studies at the University of California at Los Angeles, where his doctoral thesis focused on Soviet decision-making. He began his career in Washington in the early 1980s working at the Department of Defense and the Department of State. From 1986 to 1988 he held the Middle East portfolio at the National Security Council staff at the White House. At the beginning of the George Bush Administration, Dennis became Director of the Policy Planning Staff of the Department of State with the rank of Ambassador. He worked closely and directly with James A. Baker on a broad range of U.S. foreign policy issues, but he played a particularly critical role in bringing about the Madrid Conference of 1991 which began the peace process negotiations that led to the Oslo accord of 1993.

When the Clinton administration took office in early 1993, Dennis remained at the Department of State as Special Middle East Coordinator. He continued his efforts to further the peace process, working actively and directly with Secretary Warren Christopher and Secretary Madeleine Albright.

Mr. Speaker, Dennis Ross has been an outstanding and a devoted public servant—he has spent incredible time and energy in furthering the foreign policies of the United States. His service to our nation is the epitome of bipartisanship in foreign policy. I invite my colleagues to join me in paying tribute to Dennis Ross for his committed service to our nation and in wishing him success in his future endeavors.

HONORING ARTHUR "PAUL" BAXTER

HON. GARY A. CONDIT

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, December 11, 2000

Mr. CONDIT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Arthur "Paul" Baxter on the occasion of his retirement from the City of Modesto on December 28, 2000.

Paul is a quiet man who has worked tirelessly for the city for 12 years. His strong ability to build consensus and bring collaboration has made him not only an asset, but often, a necessity. His work with city council committees and citizen advisory groups has been invaluable. During Paul's tenure at the City, I have had the privilege of working with him on

many projects. I, along with those he has served, will sorely miss him.

Some of his many accomplishments include his leadership and direction in the Joint City/County Administration Building, his work with the development and completion of a Joint Emergency Dispatch Center, and his dedication and commitment to the Tuolumne River Regional Park Master Plan.

Above all, Paul is a devoted father, son and brother. He is a thoughtful and generous neighbor and friend. An avid gardener, he shares his abundant supply of flowers, including his famous sweet peas, with his neighbors and coworkers. He is an alumnus of Stanford University and has remained active in fund-raising efforts and community programs since 1996.

Beyond his 12 years of dedication and commitment to the City of Modesto, he has quietly and generously supported and volunteered for causes such as the library sales tax and the Performing Arts Center.

Paul exemplifies a good man. He is kind, generous, decent and caring not only to his family, but to his neighbors, his friends, his coworkers and his community. Because of Paul's association in Modesto, our community is a much better place.

It is a privilege to call him friend.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that my colleagues join me in honoring Paul Baxter.

HONORING COLORADO STATE SENATOR JOHN EVANS

HON. BOB SCHAFFER

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, December 11, 2000

Mr. SCHAFFER. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to honor State Senator John Evans. Over the years, John has significantly contributed to ensuring Colorado's children have access to the best education possible. As Colorado State Board of Education Member-at-Large, and now as a state senator, John has exemplified the Colorado State Board of Education's motto, "To lead, serve, and to promote quality education for all," throughout his public service career.

Elected to the board in 1994, John fought hard to get dollars to the classroom. As you know, this is not only a struggle at the state level, but a constant battle at the federal level. Republicans like Senator Evans have fought hard to enable local school districts to manage and direct their funding. We know teachers, parents, and school districts are best qualified to determine how their money should be spent.

To make certain that dollars get to the classroom, state school leaders are the best line of accountability. Senator Evans has followed through, and Colorado's children reap the benefits. Mr. Speaker, John Evans has consistently advocated funding local schools directly from the state, rather than filtering money through various bureaucracies. As a parent of five with three children in a public charter school, I thank him for his efforts.

I remember the theme of John's senatorial campaign was, "Helping individuals help their